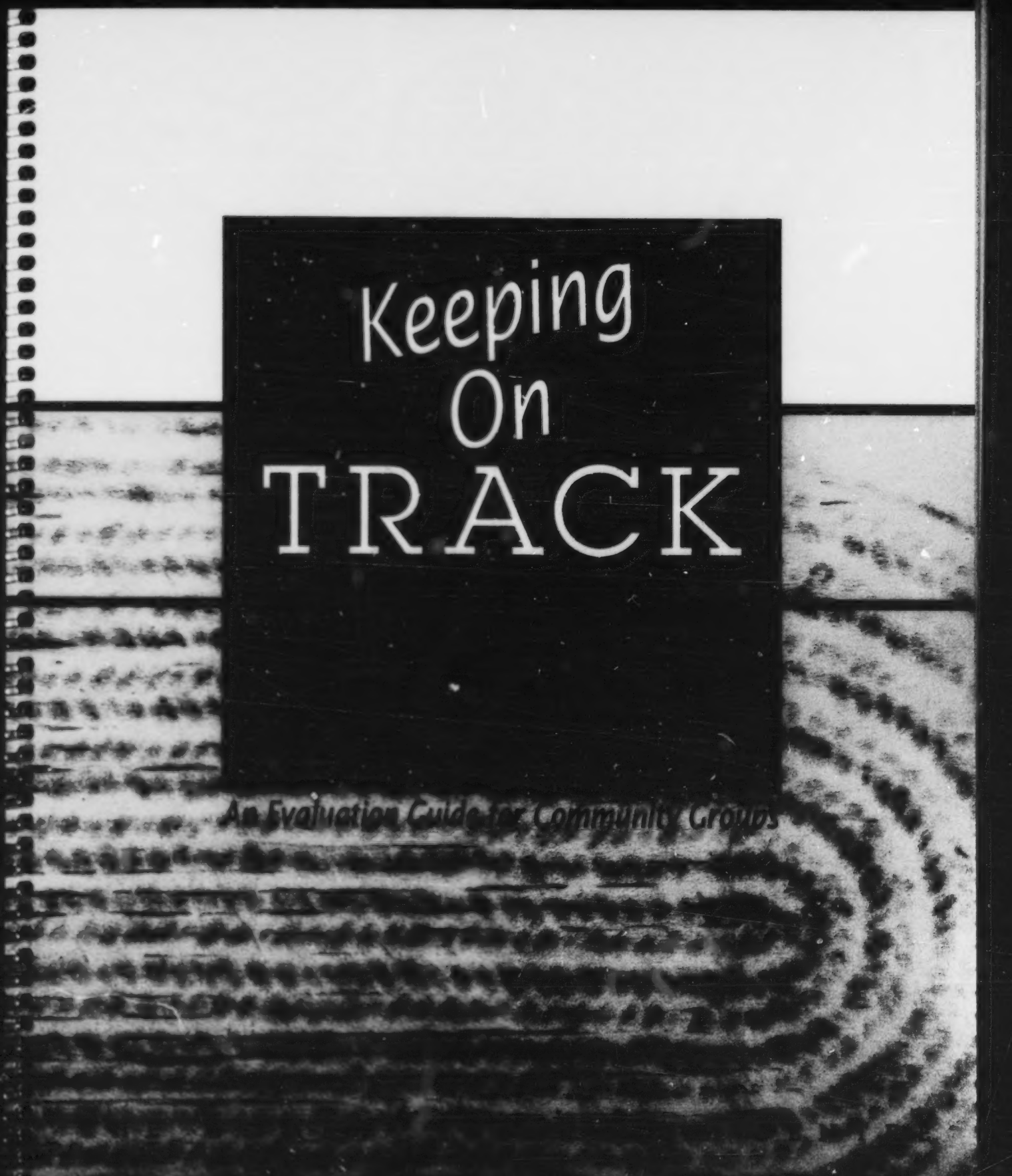
Keeping
On
TRACK
An Evaluation Guide for Community Groups

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An Evaluation Guide for Community Groups

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THE WOMEN'S RESEARCH CENTRE

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Keeping on Track: an Evaluation Guide for Community Groups
is an adaptation of an earlier book, ***An Evaluation Guide for Women's Groups,***
which was developed by Jan Barnsley, Diana Ellis and Helga Jacobson.

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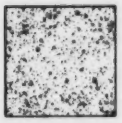

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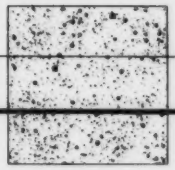
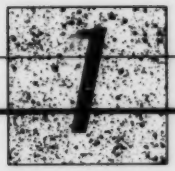


Who this guide is for

- This guide has been written for community groups. It pays particular attention to the needs of AIDS community service organizations.
- It outlines a method of evaluation that has been developed especially for a range of non-profit community groups with a social change orientation.
- The evaluation method described in this guide is known as participant focused evaluation.
- You can use this method of evaluation to carry out your own self-evaluation. Or you can use it if you are being evaluated at the request of your funder.
- This guide is also useful for funders. It describes an evaluation method that is useful to community groups and that meets the standard criteria for evaluation.
- The methods in this guide have been extensively and thoroughly tested.
- Community groups have found each step of this process of evaluation useful and effective.
- Funders have likewise found that this evaluation process is appropriate to their needs.



Evaluation can be useful

We believe that evaluation is a useful activity. If the evaluation suits your needs and interests, you can get a lot out of the process.

Evaluation can help you develop and maintain perspective on your work. A community group is always under pressure to respond – to changing public interest in your issue, to government, and most importantly, to the needs of the people you exist to serve. Given all these demands, it's hard to maintain perspective.

Evaluation can give the individuals in a group an opportunity to step back from the daily demands of the work and get a sense of the big picture: what work is really being done, and why?

It can help you understand where you're at: whether and how goals have changed; what factors inside and outside the group have been affecting your work; what's going well; and where changes might need to be made. Evaluation can also help you with planning. What you learn about the work you've done is very useful in figuring out what to do next.

Evaluation can be a way of making visible the work you do as a group and as individuals in that group. In the daily demands for service and action, many time-consuming tasks can easily be taken for granted. And you can get caught up in the quest for results or outcomes much as funders often seem to do. As well as serving to make your work visible, evaluation can give you a way to analyze the work.

Our aim in this guide is to present an approach to evaluation that will make it possible for groups to face evaluation with information and confidence, as respected participants in the evaluation process. This guide is just that: a guide, *not* a blueprint. Each group's situation is different and funder's requirements may vary. You can adapt the examples that we provide to fit your own situation.

Participant focused evaluation developed in response to community groups' concerns

The kind of evaluation this guide describes is called participant focused evaluation. Participant focused evaluation has been developed in response to concerns which community groups had about evaluation.

Evaluation has traditionally been a process in which someone, often a funding agency or its representative, stands apart from a group and passes judgment on its success or failure.

Many groups have been understandably skeptical about the degree to which evaluation methods take into account innovative organizational structures (such as collectives) and alternate approaches to services (such as self-help and peer counselling).

Government funders and other agencies providing money for social issues often use evaluation as a way to justify their own funding decisions. Increasingly, there is pressure on groups to undertake evaluation. With government cutbacks in services and programs, evaluation of the cost effectiveness of a group's work is becoming one of the strings attached to funding.

In the absence of wide acceptance of evaluation methods that are appropriate for community groups, funders' demands for evaluation can make groups feel anxious and defensive.

Evaluation need not be scary

Participant focused evaluation does not work with an "us" and "them" situation. Instead, it empowers the participants and provides a useful tool for future planning. It recognizes that the typical community group operates on an inadequate budget, makes use of innovative structures, and often has a social change orientation. It allows you to collect evaluative information in a variety of practical ways.

The rules are common sense

Any evaluation process has rules or guidelines that make it a systematic process. Participant focused evaluation is no exception. The rules or guidelines ensure that the evaluation makes all parts of the work being evaluated as visible as possible.

The rules don't have to be complicated. In fact, they're really a matter of common sense.

For example, it's a rule that an evaluation must have a design or a plan. It's also a rule that the evaluation design outlines what kinds of information to collect, and why; how to collect it, from whom or where.

The design is the framework. It makes it possible for anyone involved in the evaluation to see:

–what the process is;

–how to participate in the process; and

–how the pieces fit together.

Another rule is that the questions or topics to be covered in an interview or questionnaire are agreed upon in advance. You don't make them up as you go along.

It's also a rule that you must collect the same kinds of information about those events/services/actions that you intend to compare to each other.

Evaluation must respect the organization's rules about confidentiality. A group must retain the right to restrict or deny access to its confidential files. In addition, those involved in the evaluation must develop coding systems and rules that will protect the confidentiality of the evaluative information.

Evaluation does involve the group in critical discussion. However, the use of the word, "critical" doesn't mean you are going to be attacked. Critical discussion involves thinking and talking about the questions the group has about its work.

Blame is *never* the issue in an evaluation process. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand how things worked, or didn't, and why, and what improvements you can make.

Any evaluation requires making judgments. The Oxford Dictionary defines evaluation as "estimating or forming an opinion based on data."

Evaluation methods are ways to collect the data or information you need to make the estimate.

There are lots of ways you can gather data or information. You can interview the participants in person, or you can give out questionnaires. The questions you ask can be *closed* (with a checklist of possible answers) or *open-ended* (with no guidelines for answers). You can also collect and analyze the information recorded in project log books or journals, and in minutes of meetings or group discussions.

Evaluation is useful because...

- It helps us to see what's really involved in the work we do.
- It gives us a chance to step back from the day-to-day work and think about what we're doing and why.
- It helps us to figure out how well we're doing what we set out to do.

- It can help us understand why we're having a problem and how to solve it or live with it.
- It can show us where we might improve our project.
- It can give us ideas and information for planning our future work.

What is participant focused evaluation?

Participant focused evaluation begins with the perspective and interests of the group. It uses these as the basis for designing an evaluation which allows the group to assess how well it is meeting its aims.

Participant focused evaluation recognizes the knowledge and expertise of those who direct and do the work, and those who are the users, or the target, of the work. It encourages maximum input from the group itself.

The phrase, "participant focused" refers to the people who are directly involved in designing the work and carrying it out, ***and*** the people the work is aimed at.

Participant focused evaluation provides an opportunity for a group to increase its understanding of what parts of its work are going well, and why; and what parts are problems, and why. This makes it possible for a group to repeat its successes and avoid repeating problems.

Participant focused evaluation is a constructive, respectful and rigorous approach to evaluation. It can give the group practical information for development and planning.

Participant focused evaluation is, like any other process of evaluation, a way of ***making an assessment***. To make sure that the assessment is fair and credible, the evaluation must operate in a systematic way.

Information must be collected and analyzed according to certain rules and guidelines.

Here are some of the features of participant focused evaluation:

- **The evaluation is for the participants in the group**

  It must be useful to the people who are doing the work that is being evaluated. This means that your group's *goals* and *objectives* – what your group has *set out to do* and *intends to accomplish* – must be the standards against which your group's work is judged. Ideally, evaluation should be built in from the very beginning of the work, as soon as you've decided on your goals and objectives.

Evaluation can help the group identify how and why the work is effective, and how and why it can be improved. Evaluation can also give you information which can help you think about and understand better the issues and strategies involved in your work. An effective participant focused evaluation is therefore extremely useful in planning.

The evaluation results can help other groups doing similar work. The results may also help funders to justify funding the kind of work your group is doing and the new projects that grow out of it.

- **This kind of evaluation process includes ways to let you use the information from the evaluation during the evaluation process, and not just at the end**

  This means there should be regular written and/or verbal reports to the group on the evaluation findings. It also means building in meeting time for the whole group to talk about what the evaluation is showing and what it means for the ongoing work.

- **Participant focused evaluation assumes success**

  A group comes together to succeed in accomplishing its goals and objectives. Similarly, a funder does not fund a group's work with the aim of wasting money; it assumes funding will help the group to succeed.

  The central questions in an evaluation are why and how well the group is succeeding in doing what it set out to do, where and why it is falling short, and how it can improve.

  It's a constructive approach, not a negative one. The emphasis is on degrees of success. It's not a question of success or failure.

- **Focusing on the participants' perspective means that recognition of a group's social change orientation is built into the evaluation**

  Participant focused evaluation is designed for non-profit groups which are not in the business of producing or selling products, but which provide services, educate the public, and promote change.

  Change of this kind is hard to measure. It's hard to determine how and why social change occurs and what effect any one group or action has had. Therefore the focus and emphasis in evaluating social change efforts must be on describing the process of the work and assessing how well specific strategies are working.

- **Participant focused evaluation provides a description of what the work actually is, what it involves, the context in which the work is being done, and how well it is progressing**

  The emphasis is on collecting descriptive, information, such as:

  –the views of workshop participants;

  –who service users are;

  –how people are affected by the issue or problem; and

  –what people want from a particular program.

  The focus is on collecting information that will add to an understanding of how well the group's strategy or service is working, and why.

- **Participant focused evaluation makes it possible to recognize shared interests rather than ignoring or denying them**

  Often the people in a group who are delivering a service, for example, have interests in common with the people who use the service. The evaluation must include information and input from the people doing the work *and* the people the work is designed to help or reach.

- **Participant focused evaluation means that the group has control**

  The group has the right to decide, or to participate in decisions about, what questions will be asked and what information will be collected to measure what happened to the work in a given time period.

  The group also has the authority to decide what the time period should be for measuring what is happening with the work. If the funder or evaluator insists on setting the time period, then at the very least the group must have the right to negotiate the decision. The standards for measurement must be the group's own goals and objectives for the work in that time period.

Fancy words are not important here

The words people use when they talk about evaluation can sound like a foreign language. There are ongoing debates about such things as subjective versus objective approaches, qualitative versus quantitative data, process or formative versus summative or outcome evaluation, and so on.

In this guide we're not concerned with such debates. We explain the terms as we go along. Appendix A includes definitions of some of the technical terms you might run into (see p.59).

2 How to prepare for an evaluation

The clearer the group can be about evaluation, the greater chance you have of making the evaluation a useful and positive process.

The sorting out you do in the preparation phase will help you later in the process of developing an actual evaluation design.

Take some time to ask yourselves what purpose evaluation can serve for your group. How might evaluation be useful?

1. Think about what you want to learn

A key part of a group's preparation for evaluation is to identify what questions it has about its own work.

What information would be particularly useful and why?

The emphasis should be on what you need to know to make the work more effective. Maybe you simply want to know, "Are we really doing what we set out to do?" Or you may want to know which parts of your project are most useful, and why.

You may have more specific questions. There are some examples in the chart on p.13.

This is a good time to think about the work and what you want to learn about how it's going.

2. Figure out how you can answer your questions

Look at the ways your group already collects information about its work and keeps track of what it's doing. Can you improve the methods you've been using? How are you going to collect the additional information that you've identified as being useful?

If you use a log book to record telephone calls or events or meetings or things to do, the entries in the log will have a lot of information about what work is being done. You may want to record more information in the log, such as, how did people hear about your group or decide to contact you?

Your group's correspondence files or meeting files will also contain useful information. The files can tell you about the demands on your group's time and resources, the issues you have addressed, etc. How can you use these files in an evaluation to answer questions you have about the group's work?

Will the files have to be re-organized or streamlined? Will confidentiality be an issue? Are there some files that must be kept strictly confidential? Can information be taken from some files without breaking confidentiality? How?

If your group keeps a clippings file, you can use it to assess both response to the group's work and how actions outside the group affect your work.

Do you already distribute forms or questionnaires to get feedback on your work? If so, you can use these to see what responses people have had to the group's work. What additional questions do you need to include to assess the work?

The chart on p.13 has some suggestions as to how you can answer the questions you've come up with.

3. Decide what you need to proceed

When you review the questions you have and how the evaluation might answer them, you may find you need to collect and analyze more information than people in the group can manage.

If this is the case, you need to decide if you're going to collect less information or to hire someone – from inside or outside the group – to do that work. Or you may want to have an evaluator work with the group to coordinate the collection and analysis of the information.

Don't jump to the conclusion that you need to call on an outside "expert." When you've gone carefully through the steps in this preparation phase, you'll be in a better position to decide. Solid preparation will help the group to be clear about its own resources and the ability to undertake the evaluation on its own.

It may seem simpler to hire an outside expert. But the evaluation's usefulness will depend largely upon the group's participation in the evaluation, and how well the evaluation fits into the group's ongoing work.

By this point it will also be possible to identify some of the skills an evaluator should have. For example, if statistics or counting (i.e. how many people come to workshops, how many use the service etc.) is only a minor part of what the group needs to know, an evaluator whose major strength is in statistics will not be appropriate.

If interviews with staff and/or participants or clients is a priority, the evaluator or consultant will need to have skills in interviewing and experience in using interviews as a method of collecting information.

It may be possible for the group to review the work of potential evaluators. You will want to find out:

–if they have evaluated similar kinds of groups or projects in the past;

–what approach they took, and how it fits with your needs; and

–how respectful, cooperative and thorough they were.

The group may decide to make a list of evaluators who would be acceptable. Or the group can develop a list of criteria that it wants to use in selecting an evaluator.

4. Decide who should be involved in the evaluation

The information you've collected in the first three steps will give you a sense of who should be involved in the evaluation. Being "involved" in the evaluation can include everything from collecting evaluation information or data to attending evaluation review meetings to assisting in writing the evaluation report.

The evaluation must be both manageable and an accurate reflection of the work of the organization. You can figure out the kinds of involvement you want based on who is actually responsible for doing the work, who provides assistance and support, and so on. People's degree of involvement in the evaluation should match their degree of involvement in doing the work.

You need to have some feedback mechanism so that everyone who should have input does have input.

One solution may be to set up an *evaluation committee*. The people on the committee need to be familiar with the overall work of the organization, willing to take part in the evaluation process, and committed to sharing the information.

If you do have an evaluation committee, you need to ensure that it's accountable to the organization as a whole. One possibility is to have a "report from the evaluation committee" as an automatic agenda item at regular group meetings. Remember, the most effective evaluation is one in which the group participates as fully as possible.

5. Estimate the cost of doing the evaluation

Now it's possible to put together an initial budget for the evaluation. The aim at this point is to get a clearer idea of how much the evaluation might cost. If necessary, you can use this budget to apply for funding for the evaluation and in negotiating with the evaluator(s).

You will probably want to revise this budget later on, as you work out the specifics and a final evaluation design. But it's useful to have an initial budget as a reference.

Be sure to estimate the cost of all the tasks you think will be involved in the evaluation. Also, don't forget to include such things as staff time. If workers will be involved in collecting and analyzing information, they may have to be paid overtime. Or you may have to hire relief workers to fill in for them.

If you intend to have an evaluation committee, remember there are costs involved in meetings. Don't forget to include the cost of photocopying, stationery, resource materials, etc. If you're going to hire an evaluator, be sure to include an estimate of what her/his time will cost.

To sum up

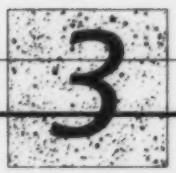
The preparation phase we've outlined in this section is designed to empower and inform groups that are beginning an evaluation.

The aim of preparation is to clarify what the group needs and expects from the evaluation process in order to ensure the evaluation is useful to the group. These five preparatory steps give the group ways to figure out what its evaluation needs are, so that the group's perspective can be central to the evaluation.

PREPARING FOR THE EVALUATION

This chart gives you an idea of how you might organize your preparation.

What do we want to know about how the work is going?	**How can we answer those questions?**	**When?**	**How will we make use of the answers?**
What do the people who are working on the project think about how the project is going? What suggestions do they have for making the project better?	Ask workers and volunteers to make notes in the project log. Interview workers and volunteers.	Throughout the project. Near the beginning of the project and halfway through.	Talk about the notes and suggestions at project meetings. Decide which ones to act on. Say why in the minutes, and in the project reports.
What are we learning as we go along about what this project can accomplish?	Check minutes or notes from project meetings. Check the project log and any feedback from project workers and volunteers	Regularly.	Include this information in project reports. Decide what else, if anything, we need to do.
How will we know whether we are meeting our objectives for this project?	Talk about the objectives. Note how we are meeting them or not. Note what we are learning about what our objectives really mean.	Regularly.	Decide what changes we need to make, if any. (For example, to change an objective.) Say why. Include this in the project report.
Are we reaching the people we want to reach? How many people are we reaching?	List who we want to reach. List who we're reaching. Compare the lists.	All the way along.	Think about any changes we can make to do better. Decide what to do and do it.
What are we learning as we go along about the needs of the people we're trying to reach? What suggestions do they have for us?	Ask some of the people we're reaching. Decide which ones to ask. Use interviews or questionnaires.	All the way along or half way through the project and once more before the end.	Discuss. Decide what, if anything, we can do differently. Do it. Write down what changes we want to make and why we are making them. Put this information in the project report.



Negotiating for an evaluation method

If your group requires funding for its evaluation or if the evaluation is required by the funder, you will have to negotiate with the funder. This chapter looks at the questions you need to ask to find out what the funder expects of the evaluation. It also describes how you can negotiate to make sure your own needs and interests are central to the evaluation.

Funders have different approaches, but they all want to know what happened to the funds

All funders want an account of how a group spent the funds it received.

Most funders want a report that outlines what work the group did with the money and whether it accomplished its goals. Often they want a report that is strong on numbers – how many activities, workshops, and numbers of people served. For some funders this is enough. Others want an evaluation with extensive documentation of all aspects of the group's work. The scale of evaluation a funder wants is usually in proportion to the amount of money funded.

Funders also have different approaches to the way evaluation is done.

Some permit flexibility in evaluation. They may say that the evaluation design and the choice of evaluator should be mutually acceptable to the funder and the group. Funders may allow the group to select the design and the evaluator according to guidelines they set out. Or they may impose the evaluation requirements.

Whatever the funder says, your group's participation in the decisions around evaluation is *essential* if the evaluation is going to be appropriate and useful. To ensure your effective participation, you may need to negotiate with the funder in order to clarify the relationships between the funder and the group itself, and an evaluator.

Negotiation assumes a common interest in success

The aim of negotiation is to produce a useful, appropriate evaluation. Funder, group and evaluator will all benefit if the basic assumptions, objectives and intentions are clear from the start.

In any negotiation about the evaluation, it's important to be clear about what both sides have in common, and to acknowledge that both sides want the group to succeed in its work.

It is assumed the funder wants and expects the group to succeed in its work or it wouldn't be funding it in the first place. Similarly, the group intends to succeed and knows what it can do, or it wouldn't have applied for funding or be doing the work.

This doesn't mean you have to agree

This does not mean that the funders and the group have the same political perspective or values. On the contrary, the group's aims may well be to challenge or change the policies, values or perspectives of the funding institution or government.

Therefore the focus in the evaluation must be the work itself – whether and how well it is proceeding.

On this point, the funder and the group must agree.

You need to know what the funder wants

In any negotiation process you will need to clarify how the needs and expectations of the funder and the group fit. You can ask the funder these questions:

- *Why does the funder want the evaluation done?*
- *What does the funder want the evaluation to deal with?*
- *What purpose will the evaluation serve for the funder?*
- *What use will the funder make of the results of the evaluation?*

To answer these questions, you go through the process of clarifying interests. When you have a picture of the funder's needs and expectations, you can see how they fit with your own. (You have already clarified your own needs and expectations by going through the steps in preparing for the evaluation, outlined in the last chapter.)

The process of clarifying interests

Various agencies, such as some of Health and Welfare Canada's programs, have a standard set of objectives for evaluation of projects they

fund. If you receive funding from such a program you may have seen their objectives before you applied for funding.

In most cases, the objectives are meant to cover a variety of projects, groups and situations, and are open to interpretation.

It is essential that the funder, through its field officer or project officer explain to you what the evaluation objectives ***mean*** for your specific work. Get it in writing, so that it's official.

Get it in writing

Everyone's interests, and particularly the group's, are protected by having a written statement of agreements about the evaluation.

Before the evaluation begins, you want to reach agreement with the funder on the goals and process of the evaluation. Use meetings or an exchange of letters between the funder and the group to clarify what's involved in the evaluation. Put ***all*** agreements in writing for reference during the evaluation.

When the evaluation is underway, record any changes to agreements about the evaluation process.

Questions to consider about the funding of the project being evaluated

- *Why is the funder giving money to your group?*
- *What does the funder expect the work of your group to accomplish?*

For example, some agencies set priorities each year which require that they give funds to certain target groups (such as seniors, women, Native communities, youth etc).

Some funding agencies give money for demonstration projects to support "new" or "innovative" approaches to problems or issues. If your group is funded under such a program, it is important to know what the funder sees as new or innovative about your group's project. Also, demonstration funding implies that the funder will want to compare your approach with that of other, perhaps more traditional, groups. Ask for examples of comparisons the funder might want to make.

If your group is being funded to promote "change" in a particular issue it's important to know what the funder considers change to be. Ask for specifics. Perhaps the funder can give examples of change other groups have produced which would clarify what the funder(s) meant by change. For example, if the goal is attitudinal change, whose attitudes are the target? How will it be decided whether or not change took place?

Questions about the evaluation

- **Why does the funder want your group's work to be evaluated?**

  Perhaps it's to justify the decision to fund you. If so, what do they mean by justification? Is it numbers (number of people from target group reached)? Is it changes that are expected as a result of your work? If so, do the changes that the funder expects fit with those your group expects? To whom does the funder have to justify the decision to fund you? Politicians? Another level of bureaucracy? Other groups like yours? Other levels of government?

- **Is evaluation a standard requirement of funding?**

  If so, you can ask for examples of evaluations of other groups funded by this agency. How does the funder evaluate other groups? If terms such as "indicators," "measures of success" and "outputs" are used, get specific examples of what these terms mean to help you know what you're dealing with. Try to find out what the funder usually does with evaluation reports. Are the reports distributed to other groups? To institutions/government departments? To the management of the funding agency?

- **What time period is the evaluation to cover?**

  Is it intended for all or part of the period for which the group is funded?

- **What does the funder expect in an evaluator?**

  If the evaluator is to be "objective" or "independent" ask for examples of what that means, particularly in terms of the funder's expectations or requirements of the relationship between evaluator and the group.

  If possible, find out who the funder has used in the past as evaluators. What qualifications or credentials do the evaluators have? Are they appropriate to the work of your group? Ask for examples of their work. It may be possible to check with some of the other groups that have been evaluated. How much involvement have other groups had in selecting the evaluator and the evaluation design? Does the funder reserve the right to hire the evaluator and/or decide on the design? How much room do you have to negotiate? *How does the funder's perspective compare with what your group wants and needs?*

To sum up

You need to be clear about:

- What the funder wants the evaluation to focus on.
- How the funder expects the evaluation to be done.
- What measures or criteria are important to the funder.
- What involvement in decision-making your group can have.
- What credentials or experience the funder wants in an evaluator.
- What relationship the funder expects the evaluator to have with your group.
- The purpose of the evaluation report.
- What the funder expects in terms of distribution of the report.

STEPS IN NEGOTIATING

Even if your group does not have a great deal of room to negotiate the terms of the evaluation, these steps can help you clarify your understanding of how your approach to the evaluation compares to the funder's.

1. Review any statements the funder has made about **why it is funding your group and why it wants an evaluation**. Review the written statements that were exchanged when the group applied for funding. Look at the booklet that explains the program under which your group was funded. (If you don't have a copy, ask the funder for one.) Make notes of any verbal statements the funder's representatives made to you when you were applying for funding.

2. Compare all these statements with **your group's own statements of what it intends to do**. Note points of difference and agreement. Compare the funder's evaluation requirements with your group's requirements and plans for evaluation. How well do they fit? Where are there differences, agreements, questions?

3. Write up **your group's understanding of why you have been funded and why evaluation is required**. Be as precise as possible. Note any confusion you have located, or contradictions between written and verbal statements.

4. If it's appropriate (it's not always possible but go for it if you can): Send this to the funder's representative stating that this is your understanding and asking for agreement or clarification. Review the funder's response carefully. If it is at odds with the group's understanding, write back and ask more questions.

5. Clarify **what the funder expects of the evaluation process itself**. Determine what requirements the funder has for evaluation. What work does it want the evaluation to focus on? Why? What time period? What criteria does the funder intend to use to evaluate your group's work? What does the funder expect from the evaluator?

6. Be assertive. Remember, the evaluation must meet your group's needs.

How to develop an evaluation design

This chapter outlines a process for putting together an evaluation design. You will find out how to develop the evaluation's goals and objectives, and how to design the evaluation instruments.

The steps involved in developing an evaluation design are the same for groups undertaking their own, self-administered internal evaluation and for groups having their work evaluated by an external evaluator.

There will be some variations depending on the project needs and evaluators involved, but the key elements are the same.

We use the term "evaluator" in this section to refer to either an internal evaluator (or internal evaluation committee) or an external evaluator.

1. Meet to clarify the evaluation focus and assumptions of success

A 2 1/2 to 3 hour workshop session or meeting between the evaluator and the group is enough time to complete the discussion needed to develop the evaluation focus, assumptions of success and context. Write all the points in the discussion on a flip chart and type up the notes for the evaluation file.

Clarify the evaluation focus

To clarify the **focus** of the evaluation, consider the following questions:

- *What do we want to know?*
- *Why do we want to know it?*
- *Who is the evaluation intended for?*

COMPONENTS OF THE EVALUATION DESIGN

This chart outlines the chronological process the group and evaluator go through to produce the evaluation design.

chronological process	**results in**	**order in which it appears in evaluation design**
1. meet to clarify evaluation focus and assumptions of success	clarification of: • what do we want to know? • why do we want to know it? • how will we know we've succeeded?	evaluation goals and objectives
2. review context within which the work is taking place	understanding of context and how that affects work	evaluation focus and assumptions of success context of work
3. finalize evaluation goals and objectives	basis for evaluation structure	
4. design evaluation instruments	tools to gather data	evaluation methodology • statement of methodology • description of instruments • time frame
5. develop evaluation work plan and time frame	planned schedule which everyone involved can follow	how results will be used
6. decide what to do with the results of the evaluation	agreement on how final results will be shaped and who will get them	
7. reach agreement on the evaluation design		

Listing and discussing the responses to these questions allows everyone's perspective to get out on the table before the evaluation begins. If there are major differences it's best to sort them out at this stage.

A joint discussion between the evaluator and the group is one way to clarify the evaluation's focus when the evaluation is beginning at the same time as the project. However, if the evaluation is starting after the project has begun, the evaluator may find it useful to interview workers responsible for various parts of the project.

S/he would ask everyone the same questions and would also ask workers to describe what they actually do. After the interview the evaluator would review the material and then meet with the group to discuss the evaluation focus.

Clarify assumptions of success

The evaluator and group should review what their assumptions of success are for the work to be evaluated.

The following questions can help you clarify your assumptions of success:

- *What do we think the success of our work will look like?*
- *What would degrees of success look like?*
- *Whose interests will the success serve?*

Only when you know what you think success will look like can you identify what your evaluation indicators are. Evaluation indicators are the criteria you'll use to measure how successful the project has been. Remember, your project can have a satisfactory conclusion even if it didn't fully meet all of its objectives.

Some questions about **focus** and **the assumptions of success** are included in the following examples. Your group might be involved in all three areas covered by these examples: advocacy, service and education. The group may also have other significant components, such as networking and liaison. You can divide the work in the way that makes most sense to you. Talk about focus and assumptions of success for each area of work.

Advocacy group

You can be any kind of advocacy group. Just for the sake of this example, suppose your group is concentrating on human rights protection and promotion.

• You may be a PLWA (Persons Living with AIDS) group working on a national strategy to prevent discrimination based on HIV infection or perceived HIV infection.

• You may be a seniors' group working to change retirement provisions in a pension policy.

• You may be a group working to improve mentally or physically challenged people's access to career paths.

Focus

–What are the group's reasons for advocacy?

–Is the focus to change legislation or policy? To change attitudes of legislators/policy-makers and/or the general public? To encourage the development of an issue in a certain way? To politicize a large/small/specific/general population of people?

All of these require specific attention in an evaluation so it is important to discuss fully the areas the group wants to focus on.

Assumption of success

–Is it success only if policy is actually changed?

–Is the advocacy unsuccessful if you don't get the policy changed, or will the group consider other forces that might have affected the work?

–Can success be assumed if large numbers of people become involved? If public support grows?

–Is politicization assumed to be a measure of success? How can we measure that?

Service group

You can be any kind of service group. Just for the sake of this example, suppose the goal of your group is to obtain greater access to affordable housing.

• You may be a HIV/AIDS group working for a hospice.

• You may be a seniors' group working for better long-term care facilities.

• You may be a women's group working for a transition house for battered women and children.

Focus

–What do the people your group is concerned about really need in terms of housing?

Assumption of success

–What can your group realistically hope to accomplish?

–Would the group consider its work successful if only a few people find suitable housing? If the ideal kind of housing does not become a reality but civic and provincial support for the project is substantially improved? If the need for the housing gains greater support within your own community?

Education group

You can be any kind of education group. Just for this example, suppose you are offering a series of education programs to your target group.

- You may be trying to educate young IV drug users about the need for clean needles.
- You may be trying to sensitize the community to the issue of elder abuse.
- You may be trying to educate non-Native social workers about the dispute resolution processes used in the Native community.
- You may be organizing assertiveness-training programs for physically challenged students.

Focus

–Is the group focusing on the education of the general public or professionals, or a particular group? Is the work aimed at specific skill development, or attitude change, or behaviour change?

Assumption of success

–What do you expect to accomplish? Is it essential to reach large numbers of people? Does success mean actual change in people's skill levels? Or change in behaviour? Or change in attitudes?

–How can you measure such change? If people are empowered by the project, does that constitute success? What will tell you that people are empowered?

2. Review the context within which the work is taking place

Reviewing the context or environment of the work means looking at the physical, social and economic situations in which the project is happening in order to figure out what effect they have on the work.

To review the context of the work being evaluated, consider the following general points:

- **Level of discrimination.** How does ageism, homophobia, racism, sexism, or discrimination against people who are mentally or physically challenged impact on the work of the project?

- **Housing/social services/health care**. How available are these things? How much do they cost? How does that affect people we serve or work with? Are there any special programs, sympathetic service providers? (You may find it useful to discuss each of these topics separately.)

- **Political situation**. What is the current political climate (in the community, province, country)? How does it affect our work? What obstacles or opportunities exist? Who are our allies and what are they willing to do?

- **Economic situation**. What's happening with jobs, business, etc.? How does this affect people we work with, our project?

- **Media**. Who provides supportive coverage? What kind of access do we have? Does it make a difference?

- **Cultural situation**. What is the cultural mix in the community? Is the dominant culture receptive? What difference does language make? What cultural tensions exist? What effects do they have?

- **Funding sources**. How available is funding? How receptive are funders to our issues?

It is also important to think about **the state of the issue that is the basis of the project**.

- Is this issue new to the group? New to the community?

- Is it a contentious issue?

- What is the history of previous work on this issue in the town or region?

A project does not succeed or fail on the basis of its objectives or work plan alone. The context within which the project is taking place has a powerful effect. It can all too easily be overlooked or misunderstood.

Here we provide some examples which you can use to review the context of your work. By looking at the general areas for discussion, on the previous page, and by looking at the following examples, you will be able to build your own list of factors to consider in reviewing the context of your work.

Advocacy group

Suppose your goal is to develop a national/provincial strategy around your issue.

Here are some ideas to consider and add to:

Accessibility. How close are you to the institutions you need to influence? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

Profile of liaison. Has your group built up a network of sympathetic contacts within the institutions? What power do they have? Do they recognize the importance of community control of the issue? What else do you need to know about the institution itself: for example, who is guarding what professional turf, and why?

Economy. Fundraising, for example, can be affected by the state of the local, regional or provincial economy.

Service group

Suppose your group provides support activities and facilities to people for the purpose of self-help and self-care.

Here are some ideas to consider and add to:

Physical accessibility. Is the project taking place in the community where many of your members live? Can the people you want to reach get to you? Can you get to them?

Other services. What other services exist? What level of liaison do you have with other care-givers in the area? What can they contribute? How do the institutional care-givers view your work? Are they willing to work with you? Learn from you?

Political/social/economic issues. What are the key issues in your community? How do these issues impact on your work?

Education group

Suppose you are working on a health issue. You are trying to educate the community about your issue, and you are holding a series of discussion evenings.

Here are some ideas to consider and add to:

History of the issue. What educational work has already been done? Where and by whom? With what results? What positive/negative attitudes exist around the issue in the community as a whole?

Liaison. Who are your allies and what can they do? What liaison do you have with other frontline community groups who have worked on related issues?

What is the attitude of the health care workers? Relevant social service agencies? Local government? Relevant bureaucrats?

Communications and media. How do you intend to publicize your programs? What is the attitude of the media? Can you use the local media to promote your programs? What are the relevant time-lines?

Urban/rural context. Educational programs that are effective in larger cities will probably not be applicable in smaller towns. What are the major factors you need to consider? Have you tailored your program to suit the community you are working in?

Accessibility. Are there suitable facilities and are these easily accessible to your target group?

3. Finalize the evaluation goals and objectives

Once the evaluator and the group have:

a. clarified the focus and assumptions of success, and

b. outlined the context of the work,

they will then have the information you need to finalize the evaluation goals and objectives.

It is important to note that *the evaluation goals and objectives will utilize the project goals and objectives but will not be the same.* The evaluation goals and objectives will relate directly to what the evaluation is trying to do: i.e. to describe and measure a project's progress and impact. The project goals and objectives are geared to the planning and enactment of the project itself.

Goals and objectives? How are they defined?

The difference between goals and objectives can be a bit of a mystery but it's important to distinguish between them.

A goal is a broad general statement of what the evaluation is trying to accomplish.

Objectives are specific measurable statements of what is to be accomplished by a given point in time.

See "Goals and Objectives," p.62, for a description of how to develop goals and objectives.

Obviously the evaluator and the group must agree on the evaluation goals and objectives. There must also be a firm commitment from both parties to communicate clearly and immediately about any need to adapt or change any evaluation goals and objectives during the process of the work.

How project goals and objectives differ from evaluation goals and objectives

On the next three pages there are some charts that illustrate what we've been saying about goals and objectives. You can see how project goals and objectives differ from evaluation goals and objectives. We are using very general examples here. Your own goals and objectives would focus on your own work.

Just for the sake of these examples:

- Suppose the advocacy group is working on discrimination against people with AIDS/HIV.
- Suppose the service group is working to provide temporary housing to its target group.
- Suppose the education group is working on health issues and is providing a series of discussion programs to its target group.

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY GROUP

SAMPLE PROJECT GOALS	SAMPLE PROJECT OBJECTIVES
1. to develop advocacy skills of your group	**to produce a how-to kit on advocacy skills**
2. to advocate for people living with AIDS/HIV	**to involve members of your group in actively lobbying the appropriate government/bureaucratic level on this issue**
	to design an advocacy strategy that allows maximum participation by the community on this issue

SAMPLE EVALUATION GOALS	SAMPLE EVALUATION OBJECTIVES
1. to examine the effectiveness and impact of the project in developing advocacy skills in your community	**to provide feedback to project workers about the project's effectiveness**
2. to examine the effectiveness of the project for those who are the target of the advocacy	**to assess how well the advocacy kit suited members' needs**
	to document the process of attitude change on the part of those who are the target of the advocacy
	to assess the effect of the advocacy in terms of actual policy/legislative change

HOUSING SERVICE GROUP

SAMPLE PROJECT GOAL	SAMPLE PROJECT OBJECTIVES
1. to provide protection, shelter & support for the people your group serves	**to operate a transition house** **to facilitate mutual support by residents of the house** **to develop a staff training package on counselling skills and legal information** **to liaise with community health, social and legal services in order to provide better access to services for transition house residents**
SAMPLE EVALUATION GOAL	**SAMPLE EVALUATION OBJECTIVES**
1. to determine the effectiveness of the entire transition house service to the people who use it, to the helping services, and to the transition house workers	**to describe the transition house, who uses it, why they use it, and the impact of transition house services on them** **to measure the effectiveness of the staff training program on worker and house operations** **to assess the effect of the liaison between transition house workers and systems people in terms of attitude and policy change**

HEALTH EDUCATION GROUP

SAMPLE PROJECT GOAL	SAMPLE PROJECT OBJECTIVES
1. to offer educational programming on a specific health issue to specific populations	**to determine what concerns members of specific local target populations have about the health issue** **to develop educational programs on issues of concern to local members of specific target populations** **to carry out such programming** **to encourage relevant educational institutions to develop appropriate related programs**

SAMPLE EVALUATION GOAL	SAMPLE EVALUATION OBJECTIVES
1. to assess the educational programming in terms of its adequacy, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and side-effects	**to assess what effects the educational programming has on participants** **to document the process of encouraging other institutions to develop appropriate related programs**

4. Design the evaluation instruments

At this point in the participant focused evaluation the evaluator takes all the information s/he and the group have developed so far and begins to design tools (usually called evaluation instruments) for the group and the evaluator to use.

In developing the tools, the evaluator must consider the time and resources available to the group, the information that is needed for evaluation purposes, and the skills necessary to collect and analyze the information.

How you gather data depends on what you need to know, who you will need data from, who the evaluation is for, and what uses the evaluation will have.

- The group may need to know numbers. For example, how many people hold a certain opinion or how many have used this service? Or it may need to have explanations and descriptions about how the target group experienced a specific problem or service.

- The group may need information from the users of the service. It may also need information from other community agencies, specific government departments or other key individuals.

Tools for describing the work of the project

A journal

A journal is a detailed account of the day-to-day proceedings of the project, including what happened each day and why, accounts of conversations and other communication, and so on.

Each project member can keep a journal, or one project member can be appointed to keep one for the group. Journals provide the basis for documenting and understanding the decisions made in relation to the project, its structure and history.

A log book

A log book is less historical and more quantitative in that it records the number and type of day-to-day tasks and contacts. For example it can include who is referred to whom, by whom, and what kinds of problems are raised by staff or brought to the staff.

The log book should be used consistently, documenting all the day-to-day work that comes into the project – phone calls, requests and referrals for information, services and education.

A log book provides an ongoing record of the amount of work that has been accomplished. It can also provide evidence of the need for the project itself.

Files

A well organized file system is necessary for any project. Of course, the evaluator and the group must protect and respect the confidentiality of the information in the files. This is particularly important if your group provides a service, for example, to people living with AIDS/HIV.

Tools for measuring how well the group is achieving its objectives

In an evaluation, there are many ways of asking questions, collecting data, or measuring.

For example, closed questions – those which require a "yes" or "no" type of answer – give us specific answers. But closed questions can also be limited.

On the other hand, open questions can allow someone to give a rich and descriptive response that may be difficult to analyze.

Whatever forms are chosen, the evaluator and the group must remember that at the end of the process the collected data has to be collated and analyzed. Don't take on more than you can handle.

It is important to pre-test any tool/instrument. This is done by trying it out on a few people, so you can examine the results and change questions as necessary. Describe any problem areas carefully and note the reasons for making the change.

Make sure the questions flow easily and make sure that only one question is asked at a time. Number each question so that it is possible to tabulate the results. Do not make the questions too elaborate. You want to be sure they are clear and unambiguous. Don't ask too many questions: only ask the questions that are really essential. It always takes you longer than you imagined to collate answers.

Interview guide

An interview guide is a series of questions asked by an interviewer.

The questions can be open or closed or a mix of the two. (See the sample interview on p. 70).

The topics you include in the interview arise out of earlier group discussions about the question, What do we need to know?

Drop topics that are not absolutely essential and focus on the topics that are related to one another. Do not choose too many – a two-hour interview is probably the longest you can usefully do.

The interviewer must always write out each question s/he asks. Write the responses in the first person, as they are given to the interviewer.

As soon as possible after the interview, the interviewer should write up a finished copy of the interview. This finished copy can include any additional information s/he was given and the interviewer's personal impressions of the interview.

Aide memoire

An aide memoire is a list of topics and/or questions that the interviewer asks. (See the sample aide memoire on p.71). An aide memoire is a topic guide. It is used to ensure that data is gathered systematically. It allows the interviewer to act more as a prompter than a questioner.

The aide memoire is a very open and investigative way of gathering information. The interviewer allows the actual interview situation to develop its own answers. You can develop the topic areas in the same way as you would for an interview.

The interviewer uses the aide memoire in the interview to make sure she or he covers all the relevant topics in a systematic way.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is self-administered. A project worker would give a questionnaire to someone who would then complete it on his or her own time. (See p.72 for a sample questionnaire.)

Questionnaires can be made up of open or closed questions (or a mix of both) and can collect statistics and quantitative information as well as descriptive material. Closed questions take less time to tabulate. Open-ended questions allow for more expression of views and experience.

If the questionnaires are being mailed it's best to provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and be prepared for lots of people to forget, or decide not to fill them out. Mailing questionnaires allows you to send out lots but you lose control over returns. Hand delivering and picking up questionnaires is labour intensive but it offers you more control over their return.

Records and documents

A record is any written statement prepared by an individual or agency to describe an event or transaction, and forms an official chronicle that is part of a larger work, usually on proceedings of pubic affairs. Some

examples are: Hansard, birth records, city directories, membership lists, welfare records, court records and business records.

A document is any written or filmed material other than a record which was not prepared specifically in response to some request. Documents may be personal as well as public. Examples are: letters, diaries, newspaper articles, policy statements and directories.

Records and documents are a natural source of information, are usually available on a low cost or free basis and are important for research and evaluation work. You can use records for tracking events. A review of court records, for example, would offer an official record of what happened to members of your target group in the courts.

If your group wanted to monitor change in public opinion on an issue, you could document this change by collecting newspaper and magazine clippings.

Choosing the appropriate data-gathering tools

Deciding which data gathering tools or instruments to use requires putting together – you guessed it – another chart. You figure out what you need to know, and where to find that information.

Suppose the Anywhere AIDS coalition wants to evaluate its programming. It might develop a chart that looks like this:

NEED TO KNOW?	*WHERE'S THE INFO?*	*WHO TO ASK?*	*WHAT INFO?*
priority issue of concern to program users	**community & other target group members; centre users**	**program users**	**descriptions**
other programs used by target group	**other agencies & target group**	**agencies & centre users**	**descriptions and numbers**
who uses community centre	**the users**	**users**	**descriptions and numbers**
what other models service/ program	**we develop model**	**ask other target group members**	**opinions**

Some suggested choices of evaluation instruments

Using the project and evaluation goals and objectives described in the previous section, here are some examples of evaluation instruments that would allow documentation of the work and the collection of evaluation data.

ADVOCACY GROUP

PROJECT TARGET GROUP	EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTING & COLLECTING EVALUATION DATA
community members	**1. to assess effectiveness of advocacy kit**	**1. post-training questionnaire**
targets of advocacy work	**2. to measure political impact of advocacy project on group**	**2. interviews at end of advocacy project**
project workers	**3. to document personal and attitudinal change**	**3. workers' journals**
	4. to assess effect of advocacy in terms of legislative/policy change	**4. records, e.g. Hansard, policy directives**
	5. to provide feedback to workers re their work	**5. notes of letters, meetings and phone calls**
		6. review meetings regularly to assess work –meeting notes are part of evaluation

SERVICE GROUP

PROJECT TARGET GROUP	EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTING & COLLECTING EVALUATION DATA
your target group	**1. describe how and why your target group uses transition house and the impact upon them**	**1. intake forms, follow-up forms, personal interviews**
workers	**2. to measure effectiveness of staff training program on workers and house operators**	**2. evaluation questionnaires after training program**
community	**3. to assess effectiveness of community liaison workers**	**3. interview guides for professionals/agencies**
		4. track progress of your target group through various systems, using worker journals and documents/records

EDUCATION GROUP

PROJECT TARGET GROUP	EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTING & COLLECTING EVALUATION DATA
participants	**1. to assess effectiveness of education programs**	**1. post-session evaluation forms**
other educational institutions	**2. to document progress re getting them to undertake appropriate programming**	**2. notes of meetings and phone calls, and descriptions of community action**

5. Develop a work plan and timetable for the evaluation

An evaluation design must include a work plan with a time schedule. A work plan is a way of organizing all the tasks you must complete to meet your evaluation objectives. It's a map of what you have to do and when you have to do it.

A work plan helps everyone involved to see how the pieces of the evaluation fit together. It makes it possible to relax and focus on task "x" now, knowing that time is built in later for task "y."

A work plan also provides the information you need to develop a budget for the evaluation. The work plan gives you a clear idea of all the tasks involved, and that makes it possible to figure out realistically what it will cost to do the work.

Here we suggest one way to develop a work plan.

Write out these headings on a piece of flip chart paper:

A: Objectives B. Tasks C. How long will it take? D. Dates

In column A list each evaluation objective. In column B list the tasks involved in accomplishing each objective. Include things such as setting up interviews or mailing out questionnaires as well as doing the interviews, or analyzing the returned questionnaires and so on. Number each task. Put the number 1 beside the task you have to do first. Put the number 2 beside the task you have to do second, and so on.

Then look at each of these tasks and estimate how long it will take to do each one. Be as realistic as you can possibly be. Be sure to allow yourselves all the time you'll really need for each one. Write the time each task will take in column C.

Now in column D write down the date the evaluation will start. Beginning with this date, work out what date to put beside each task on the list.

If you find you have more tasks than you have time for, think about which tasks to cut. Don't cut back on the time allowed unless you're really sure you can do it faster.

6. Decide what to do with the evaluation results

The group should decide how it wants to use the results. Of course, with participant focused evaluation, the group will be able to use the evaluation information all the way through the process, not just at the end. But it's important to decide right at the beginning what kind of final report you might do.

Probably there will be evaluation findings that will be of particular interest to the funder. Some results, however, will be more important to the group.

The funder may require a review of the project's overall effectiveness. The group, on the other hand, may need more details about the evaluation results.

You can use the evaluation objectives and the known needs of the funder and the group to help you make the decision about how to deal with the evaluation results.

7. Reach agreement on the evaluation design

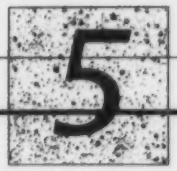
The evaluation design must be approved by the group. In most cases it will have to be approved by the funder as well; negotiation may be necessary.

If the group has participated in the design process, it will understand the evaluation design and be prepared to begin. But if an evaluator has developed a design without full consultation, the group may see the evaluation design as threatening and the evaluation work as overwhelming. These are obstacles which will have to be overcome before the evaluation can begin. The evaluation design must reflect the needs of the group whose work is being evaluated.

To sum up

In this section you have seen that an evaluation design develops from the following steps:

1. Clarify the evaluation focus and assumptions of success.
2. Review the context within which the work is taking place.
3. Finalize the evaluation goals and objectives.
4. Design the evaluation instruments.
5. Develop the work plan and timetable for the evaluation.
6. Decide what to do with the evaluation results.
7. Reach agreement on the evaluation design.



How to collect, analyze, and use the evaluation data

The work of collecting data can begin as soon as agreement has been reached on the evaluation design.

In this chapter you will find out:

- What the group's responsibilities are during the evaluation process.
- What the evaluator's responsibilities are for collecting the data, analyzing the results, and preparing the report.
- How your group can use the evaluation results.

Evaluator's responsibilities when data collection begins

At the outset, the evaluator is responsible for:

- supplying the group with the appropriate evaluation instruments
- providing any necessary training in how to use the instruments
- collecting and collating any forms being used
- beginning and reviewing data analysis.

The evaluator and the group together are responsible for maintaining regular communication about how the project and the evaluation are proceeding.

Use of evaluation instruments

The evaluator must make sure the tools are used appropriately and that s/he receives the information to be collated. It is important for the evaluator to remember that evaluation is just one part of a group's

work and they won't appreciate having to deal with lots of paper. Agreeing on a set time to hand out and collect evaluation instruments will help the group to fit the evaluation into its work schedule.

In many cases, project workers and volunteers will be the best people to do evaluative interviewing. The evaluator should review with them the basic interviewing skills and offer training where necessary. (See, for example,"Interview Skills for Open Ended Interviews," p. 63.)

Analysis of data during evaluation

Data analysis should be done throughout the evaluation process, not just at the end. And it should be discussed by those involved in the work being evaluated. This is how the evaluation can be most useful in improving a project. However, there must be no *public* discussion of the evaluative material while the evaluation is in progress. It is unfair to draw any final conclusions before ***all*** the necessary material has been collected and analyzed.

To learn from the evaluation process, the group should set up an evaluation review committee to meet on a regular basis. The evaluator should come to these meetings with data that s/he has collated and reviewed.

The committee (or it may be everyone involved in the project) can do the following:

Review and analyze the data collected

- what does it say?
- are we getting as much information as we want/need?
- what's missing?
- can we isolate any themes?

Adjust evaluative focus as needed

- are there questions we need to ask now that we didn't know about at the beginning?
- how do we best deal with them now? e.g. add a question, accept the limitations?
- if there have been criticisms of the work (from within or without), how can we use those to improve the ongoing work and the evaluation?

Deal with communication between evaluator and project/group

- are there any problems? why?
- ensure that the evaluation work is being reported to other parts of the group as needed (i.e. the board, other staff, etc.)
- change process as needed.

Evaluator's responsibilities in analyzing the data and writing the report

This information focuses on the evaluator's responsibilities once the data has been collected and it's time to write.

How to analyze the data

- Photocopy all the original data and file the originals. Work with the copies.
- Be sure to code or number each piece of data so you will be able to trace who said what.
- Read the data. Look for patterns in the responses. Make notes on what you see. Use your intuition at this stage.

Note: Whoever is doing the data analysis is going to use their own experience and assumptions to explain what the data means. That is an accepted and inevitable part of the process. But, to be fair, people must declare their assumptions. What did they expect to find? What concerns did they start with? It's useful for everyone involved to talk about how their assumptions relate to what they're learning from the evaluation information.

- Record your notes on the data on file cards or sheets of paper – one for each question, issue or topic. This will allow you to see the emerging patterns more readily.

- In working with information focused on numbers, the first step is to set up a data summary sheet. To do this, you can use a blank copy of the questionnaire or form used to collect the information. Record your tally of the responses to each of the questions on the form. Be sure to record the total number of responses received. Also note any questions people did not answer. Summarize what the data tells you.

- A useful step in analyzing interviews is to cut up the photocopied interviews and file them in separate theme or question areas. Then you can easily look at all the responses to one question and begin to note patterns.

• Key word analysis is a method used to track recurring words or comments in people's responses. To do this, you go through all the responses to one specific question and list all the phrases that say the same thing. This begins to give an overall picture that you can work with and write about.

• Use exact quotes from the interviews. This will help to make sure that responses are not misinterpreted, or that if they are, you will be able to catch the mistake. Always write the code number beside each quote so that you can easily refer back to the complete interview if necessary. (Of course, do not use the code numbers in the final report.)

• Too much detail is better at this stage than not enough. It is always easier to cut down than to add information later.

• It is essential to stay with what the people have told you and let the data guide the analysis.

• Discuss the conclusions from analyzing the data. Decide which conclusions are the most significant. If you can't agree on the conclusions, decide how you'll deal with the differences.

• The process of analyzing data is time-consuming but rewarding. Everyone will feel confident about the results if the analysis is done thoroughly.

Reporting on evaluation findings

At the beginning of the evaluation, the group, the evaluator, and the funder will have agreed on how the evaluation results are to be reported.

If the funder, or the group's board, or the project workers want a final written report, then it is the evaluator's responsibility to complete this report.

What goes into the report will depend partly on who it is for, what you want to tell them, and what they need to know.

Most funders are interested primarily in knowing how well the group met its objectives. The group may want to focus more on the process of its work – what got done, how, by whom, and how it achieved the results. It may be necessary to develop different reports, or to include or delete different parts of the report, depending on who it is going to.

Before the final report is written, it's useful to agree on an outline of what to include. As the data is gathered and analyzed, the outline can be revised by the group and the evaluator according to what the data shows.

A sample outline of an evaluation report

1. Introduction to the project

Describe

a. how the project was conceived and funded

b. what the project's goals and objectives are

c. who was involved

d. what the project structures are.

2. Description of evaluation methodology

Describe

a. the evaluation approach used and why it was chosen

b. evaluation goals and objectives

c. how evaluator was selected

d. how the evaluation instruments were designed and implemented

e. how well the instruments worked

f. any limitations of the methodology

g. how people were selected to be interviewed, or to receive questionnaires, etc. Who did the interviewing, number of people interviewed, and their situations. How questionnaires were distributed and returned.

3. Analysis of evaluation results

a. outline objectives for each phase of the project

b. note the results from the data collected

c. make the focus clear and be precise about what was assessed

d. describe how conclusions have been drawn from the data

e. in examining the answers to the evaluation questions, report on patterns of responses – note and explain both similarities and differences in those response patterns and relate them to the project framework

f. do not try to cover everything – pick out patterns, recurrent themes, and analyze what these relate to.

4. Conclusion

a. conclude with a summary of the work done and how well the goals and objectives were reached

b. include recommendations for further work or recommendations arising out of the project.

Uses of the evaluation findings

Evaluation doesn't end with a report. Evaluation results are meant to be used. Talk about them. Use them in planning your next project. Use whatever evaluation report or summary you produce to educate and orient new members of the group. Use the results to publicize the work your group has done, or specific issues you're working on.

- **Evaluation enables a group to engage in critical discussion about its work**

  Being critical involves looking for, and at, the positive and negative aspects of the work.

  The aim of the evaluation is not to point out problems. The aim is to learn how and why things turned out as they did and to improve them. Evaluation does *not* involve blaming. The purpose is to understand how things worked, or didn't, with a view to the future.

- **Evaluation results can help a group in its planning on issues and actions**

  If a service group, for example, had serious difficulties getting all of its work done, it may decide it has to cut back on one of the services.

- **A group can use the evaluation results in order to define more clearly what it wants to do, who it wants to do it with, and why it should do it**

  This discussion will help the group to set clear, realistic objectives for future work. As well, the group can look at relationships that are useful (or not), and structures that could be strengthened, eliminated, or changed.

- **Outside the group, the evaluation can be used to "prove one's worth" to funders, to the community, and to whoever else needs convincing**

  The evaluation may prove the need for a service (or for more of the same service). It can also assist in developing further analysis of an

issue or situation that may eventually result in policy or legislative changes.

- **You can use evaluation as a way to ensure that all parts of your group's work are acknowledged as useful and important**

  All too often groups rush from one project to another, or fold up after a project has been completed. It is too easy for the work to become invisible – even to people inside the group. Evaluation can help community groups to recognize the importance of their work and to see it in context.

6 Guidelines for self-evaluation

This chapter explains how a group can undertake self–evaluation. Participant focused evaluation can be carried out by the group itself, to help the group develop a clearer perspective on its work.

• Self-evaluation is a review, a process of discussing and assessing the group's work.

It helps a group:

–to see more clearly what it has actually been doing;

–to see whether the group is on track; and

–to identify ways of making things better.

• Self-evaluation can provide a chance to step back from the day-to-day demands to identify the things that influence the group's effectiveness, and to decide on what improvements, if any, the groups can make in its work.

• Self-evaluation is an important element in any full-scale, formal evaluation, and it is a good preparation for a group which is about to be evaluated by an outsider.

• The focus of self-evaluation is the work of the group, not the people.

Difficulties or personality clashes among members of a group are not uncommon. The evaluation process is a way to deal with them in the context of the group's work and what the group came together to do. Self-evaluation is not a procedure designed to resolve personal differences (although it might provide some insight into the basis for them).

• The process of self-evaluation works best when it is built into a group's work from the outset and becomes a regular practice.

• Self-evaluation is also a way of making visible what a group has accomplished. And it can provide insights into why those achievements were possible, or difficult to attain.

In doing self-evaluation there may be a tendency to focus exclusively on any negatives that are uncovered. A balance is required.

Celebrate the successes and the gains you've made. Pay attention to them. Some of the most useful lessons will be learned from analyzing how and why the good things were achieved.

What is the process of self-evaluation?

The process of self-evaluation consists of reviewing eight topics:

- history
- goals and objectives
- context
- description of work
- external relations
- achievements
- internal organization and structure
- implications for future work.

This review should take place in a meeting (or series of meetings, if necessary) of the paid and unpaid workers in the group and of those who are otherwise involved in the group (such as board members, volunteers and committee members).

In most cases it will help to have a facilitator for these sessions. She/he would be someone who knows and supports the group but is not integrally involved in its functioning. The facilitator's task is to keep participants on track and guide the discussion. (See p. 66 for "Notes for facilitators – self-evaluation process.")

Here's how you start

As soon as you decide to do self-evaluation, plan how you will make use of what you learn from the process. *Evaluation results are meant to be used.* Plan to have a follow-up meeting or some other practical way of acting on the results of the self-evaluation process.

Use a flip chart to record the discussion so that everyone can see what's being said as they go along. The comments on the flip chart should be written or typed up at the end of the self-evaluation meeting. They can be referred to when necessary during the year, and they can be used as

a basis for discussion the next time the group decides to do self-evaluation.

The basic questions you ask are simply what, who, when, how, and why. The process should be undertaken seriously and with commitment but it should be relatively informal. It can even be fun. How much time does it take? If you can, set aside an evening, followed by a full day. (See p.79 for a suggested timetable for a self-evaluation.)

Areas of review for group self-evaluation

1. History

The purpose of this part of the evaluation is to sketch the group's history according to participants' experience and perspective. Anecdotes and stories and individuals' memories of the "early days" are useful and important. However, the emphasis should be on identifying times when things changed and why, events (internal or external) that were significant in pulling people together.

It's important to review why times or events are considered important or significant.

How to do it

Questions to be answered begin at the individual level:

- When did I first get involved? (dates or events)
- Why did I first get involved? (e.g. I wanted to work on "X" issue, I wanted to meet people, I needed a job etc.)
- What work did I want to do with the organization/project?
- What was most important to me about what the group was doing or could do?
- How did my previous experience relate to the group's work?

Then consider:

- How did the group first come together?/begin to work?
- What were the first actions/activities the group undertook? Why?
- What were the most significant influences on the group?

2. Goals and objectives

It is essential that a group define its goals as clearly as possible.

- Goals are broad, general statements of what the group is trying to achieve.

• Objectives are specific, measurable statements of what is to be done by a given point. (See "Goals and Objectives," p. 62.)

Goals and objectives often change as things change outside and inside the group. Self-evaluation is one way to review this. As a result of self-evaluation, you may decide you want to revise the goals and objectives so that they reflect the group's new directions.

How to do it

• Use any written statement of the group or project's goals and objectives, mission statement, etc. Write the goals and objectives on a flip chart and put it on the wall so everyone can see them.

• Ask everyone what they mean. Discuss, or at least note, any disagreements or different understandings, taking note of the specifics.

Sometimes it becomes clear that the goals and objectives need to be modified. The group can agree to note this and decide when to do it.

3. Context

Much of the work of an organization is influenced by the environment or context in which it is located.

For example, a transition house located in a small community – with few social services, and a scarcity of housing – will have more difficulty than a house in a community with a range of services and sympathetic professionals, and housing that is affordable.

A transition house cannot do everything for the people it serves, no matter how effective its staff or programs. The context in which it operates will have an effect on how much staff time is spent on helping residents find long-term housing, or on working with agencies to provide better service.

The context or environment of any group's work can influence its effectiveness, strategy and accomplishments. Simply put, if the group gets cooperation from those agencies, systems and structures it works with, it is more likely to be effective.

How to do it

Develop a sketch of the community. You need to build a brief description of those parts of the community that relate most directly to your organization's work. Note the positive and negative impact of each upon your work.

The following list can guide the review. Add to it to reflect your own situation.

• **Housing, social services, health care**. What is the availability and cost of these services for the people you serve? `Are there special programs or services? Are there professionals who are sympathetic to your group's concerns?

• **Political climate**. How supportive are politicians, bureaucrats? How do they affect your group?

• **Level of discrimination**. What is the impact on your work of ageism/homophobia/sexism/racism/discrimination on the basis of mental or physical challenge?

• **Allies in the community**. Who are they? What do they contribute?

• **Media**. What kind of access is there to the media? How is your issue covered? Are there any helpful journalists? What are the problem areas, etc.?

• **Funding sources**. Is local, regional, federal funding available and accessible? How receptive are funders to the issues you are concerned about?

• **Cultural situation**. What is the ethnocultural mix and how does the mainstream respond to different communities? What languages are spoken? How does all this affect your work and the people you work with?

4. Description of work

This is the crucial part of the evaluation process. It can produce a picture of the group/project that you've never really seen before. It should be a detailed list of the work that you actually do. It can be a time-consuming part of the process. Allow plenty of time for it.

How to do it

For each part of your work, ask the following questions:

- What do we do?
- Why do we do it?
- How do we do it?
- What is not getting done?
- What resources (money, time, energy, outside assistance etc.) do we have? What resources do we need?

Be sure to include in the list of work the obvious things such as a newsletter or a workshop, and also such things as organizing meetings; talking about the group/project to people outside; answering requests for information; planning activities and events; writing up funding

proposals; regular staff/board/collective meetings; and office maintenance (answering the phone, replying to letters, buying supplies and so on).

The best approach is to take one piece of work or activity at a time and work through all the other questions (why, how, who, etc.) for it, before going on to the next activity or piece of work.

If there are several staff members and/or volunteer workers with specific jobs to do, it may be useful to have each one take the lead in listing what's involved in each job and answer the questions for each, with the other participants in the evaluation contributing what they know, too.

Do not just repeat or recite job descriptions. Instead, *list actual tasks* you do.

Then you review the lists.

When you look at these lists together, you will be able to see what's involved in getting the work done. You will notice what aspects of the work have priority in terms of time. For example, the group may not have designated answering requests for information as part of the work; yet that may take up a lot of time. Seeing this enables you to consider your options: to include answering requests as a priority, or to cut back in this area.

You should also be able to see what work is not getting done, where there are gaps, and what, if anything, has been left out.

Also note who is actually doing the work on the lists. For example, if board participation is a priority for your organization, you will be able to see how well that's working out. If the group has tried to involve volunteers to supplement the work of paid staff, you can see whether that's been working in practice. If some individuals have become overloaded with work, it will be possible as a group to see that and begin to think about how to deal with it.

From the lists of work and tasks involved it will also be possible to look at how the group's "people resources" and time are being used. This will add to your understanding of which parts of the group's work are in fact priorities, and to compare that to what the group said it wanted to accomplish.

5. External relations

Few groups work in isolation. It is usually necessary to work with other individuals and organizations, e.g. community groups, government departments, the media, etc. The work with other groups may be done cooperatively, to exchange information or to assist each other in similar tasks. The work with government departments might consist of an

advocacy relationship, to promote change in government policies or practices. The work with the media might consist of information-sharing with the ultimate purpose of educating the public.

How to do it

List individuals and organizations that group members have worked with or dealt with.

Discuss the following:

- What were the influences on your own group's work, e.g. what were the demands/suggestions, and how did your group respond?
- Was there duplication of effort? Were you doing work that was already being done by somebody else? Decide if the duplication was necessary or unnecessary.
- What support or assistance did your group receive? Was it good enough? What would have made it more useful?
- What feedback did you receive? What was the response to your group's work (from users of your service, from members, from people you worked with)?
- What obstacles or difficulties did you face or have to overcome? What effect, specifically, did these have?
- Did you intend to work or have contact with groups/individuals that don't show up on your list?
- Are there groups/individuals on your list that you did not expect to work with?

6. Achievements

The purpose of the discussion is to see how well the work of the organization is being done, how well it meets the objectives, or how far short it falls.

How to do it

List:

- those things you've achieved
- what was accomplished with each achievement.

Don't restrict yourselves to thinking only in terms of the work you planned to do. You may have had important unanticipated achievements.

However, at the end of this process, look at your original plans and objectives in the light of what you've identified as achievements. Take note of changes in direction or gaps that have become apparent.

7. Internal organization and structure

By now the group will have a sense of how decisions are made and who does the work.

The purpose of this part of the review is to assess how the organization functions internally. The self-evaluation process will show whether that structure is working well or needs to be adjusted.

How to do it

The aim is to check whether the group is functioning as its members want it to, or whether changes need to be made in specific internal practices.

The key questions to ask are:

- How are decisions actually made?
- How does communication within the group actually work?

In this part of the self-evaluation process it is important to be specific. Use actual examples from the group's work to focus the discussion of decision-making and communication.

Piecing together different versions or accounts of what happened in each of a few cases should enable the group:

–to identify patterns and to see where things went wrong; and

–to decide if the internal organization and structure is working as it was intended to or as the group wants it to.

In a community group it is not uncommon for some decisions to be made or communicated informally over coffee or lunch as well as in formal meetings. There are all sorts of reasons for this. Some members of the group are more interested in particular areas of work. Sometimes decisions have to be made on the spot, and there is only enough time to check with a few members. But as a result, some group members may feel left out or miss a decision or piece of information.

In a self-evaluation, specifics like this can be made visible and the group can decide what it wants to do about them.

8. Implications for future work

This is the wrap-up stage, the time to put together everything you've learned from the self-evaluation process. Be sure to pay attention to how the group will follow up on what it has learned in the self-evaluation.

How to do it

• Review the notes on the flip chart. Star the significant points, such as the problems or gaps that were identified. Also star examples of things that are going well. Problems and difficulties will probably be the main focus, but don't lose sight of the good things, too.

• Look for any patterns or similarities. These can yield clues. Perhaps the problems are a result of unclear objectives. Or perhaps they are caused by the group's structure, or by the context in which you're working, and so on.

• Consider each problem in terms of what can be done about it, rather than repeating or re-phrasing each one. Be as specific as possible about the strategy for solving a problem. In practical terms, how is the strategy going to be implemented?

• Look at what the self-evaluation process has made visible in terms of what the organization has become involved in or committed to.

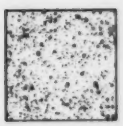
Ask the questions:

–Is this what the group wants to be doing?

–What does it say about future work?

–What direction should the group move in from here?

–What follow-up is necessary? How can the group act on what the self-evaluation revealed?



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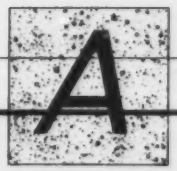


Useful background materials

What the words mean

evaluation – the process of making an assessment; estimating or forming an opinion based on data

goals – general statements of what an organization is trying to do

informant – in research and evaluation terminology, the person you interview or question is called the "informant." We avoid using terms like this one, and include it in the appendixes only for the sake of brevity.

judgment – an estimate according to some standard; usually by taking a reading of a specific situation at one point in time and comparing it to information on the situation at a later date

objectives – specific measurable statements of what an organization wants to accomplish by a given point in time

objective approach – an approach which values the perspective, views, and opinions of those outside of or distanced from the situation, event, organization, project, etc. as the primary basis for making an assessment or judgment

participant focused evaluation – an approach which uses primarily qualitative measurements, and which values the perspective and interests of the participants involved in the group or project to be evaluated as the basis of an evaluation of how well the group or project is meeting its own objectives

process or formative evaluation – an ongoing dynamic process where information is added continuously (typically using a qualitative approach), organized systematically and analyzed periodically during the evaluation period

qualitative approach – involves the collection of data or information (by means of open-ended interviews etc.) which will provide a description of the circumstances and conditions of the situation, work, event, or problem, for the purposes of making an assessment

quantitative approach – involves the collection of data or information (by means of questionnaires, structured interviews, or counting) which will provide an account of the scope of the problem, work or event based on numbers or statistics

standardized – conforming to a standard measure or design

statistics/statistical data – information derived by counting the number of similar answers to the same question, the number of people holding similar views, having similar problems, participating in an event or action, etc.

subjective approach – an approach that values the perspective, views, and experience of the participants and actors involved in a situation, event, organization, project etc., as the primary basis for making an assessment or judgment

summative or outcome evaluation – evaluation methods which emphasize or focus on the final product or results of the work of a group or project and which most often use quantitative measures primarily

systematic – methodical, according to a plan, regular

Confidentiality in evaluation

• Confidentiality in evaluation is important and discussions about protecting confidentiality should be taken very seriously. Keeping information confidential is a measure of respect for informants and is especially important if your group wants to use the evaluation findings for ongoing action, improving services etc. Assure people that they won't suffer any consequences if they choose not to answer your questions. Also assure them you will respect their confidentiality, too.

Always protect the confidentiality of your informants at all times during and after the evaluation process. If you promise anyone confidentiality, you must *always* protect it.

• If your informants name places, people and things about themselves that will identify them, you have to remove or alter those details when you write the final report.

Sometimes the naming of people, services or facts is relevant to the evaluation. In these cases be sure to check first with the people involved. It may be proper to allow identification of the services, although you may wish to delete references to actual staff.

• Decide on the method you want to use to code your informants. There are a number of options. You can give them made-up names or use numbers, letters, or a combination of numbers and letters. Write their code name/number next to their actual name on the master list and from that point on use the code to identify the interview or any documentation related to that person. Make a habit of referring to the informants by the code even if you remember who they are.

• As you locate informants, develop a master list with their name, code, address and phone number on it. Make a copy of this list and file them in a locked drawer or filing cabinet. Keep the number of people who have access to the master list to an absolute minimum.

• When the evaluation is complete, you may wish to include a list of demographics about the informants as an appendix. The items used in the demographics are usually collected on a face sheet at the time of the interview. They can include age, employment, etc. The face sheet must be identified with a code and must not include features that could identify informants.

Goals and Objectives

Goals are statements of what you are trying to accomplish

They are stated quite literally. For example a goal for a group providing home-care to people with HIV/AIDS might say, "We are working to help people with HIV/AIDS to live in their own homes for as long as they can."

The goal of a HIV/AIDS advocacy group working on human rights promotion and protection might be, "We are trying to get all governments, both federal and provincial, to amend their Human Rights Acts to prohibit discrimination based on HIV infection or perceived HIV infection."

The goal of an education group working on the issue of elder abuse might be, "We are trying to educate the local media on this issue."

Objectives are specific, measurable statements of what you want to accomplish by a given point in time

This is where you can describe the nitty gritty of what you want to do. Objectives should *not* be general statements. They must be as specific as possible.

- A service group working on a transition house might have several objectives, the first of which might be to provide safe shelter for members of its target group.

- An education group working on elder abuse might have an objective that says, "We will offer two workshops on two important aspects of elder abuse in our community between September and November."

- An advocacy group for seniors might decide that one of its objectives is, "In the next three months we will train an advocacy team from our community."

Objectives are usually directed to changing the knowledge, skill, attitudes or practices of people, or they may aim at maintaining or changing a condition of the community or organization.

You should try to make your objectives time-limited if possible. This helps keep your work realistic. Avoid writing two objectives in one. Keep the objectives separate and then the work you undertake to meet your objective can be efficiently planned. The great value about being strict and specific when you are writing objectives is that it forces you to be exact about what you want and need to do.

(Adapted from Dorothy Craig's *Hip Pocket Guide to Planning and Evaluation*, Learning Concepts, 1978)

Interview skills for open-ended interviews

Before you start

1. Make arrangements to interview the person alone.

2. When requesting the interview, say how much time you think the interview will take. Be sure the person knows that if he or she chooses not to be involved, it will not affect the service s/he receives in any way.

3. Supply yourself with something hard to write on, and use a coil bound notebook as the pages are easy to turn. Take two pens. If you are using a laptop computer, make sure you can plug it in/or you have sufficient batteries.

4. Plan to have the **interview guide** or **aide memoire** close at hand so you can refer to it comfortably. Read it over beforehand so you are familiar with it. When you are writing the final notes, you must include the question you actually asked with each response. During the interview it is more efficient simply to write the number or letter of the question beside the response rather than writing out the whole question. Any question you've asked in addition to those on the interview guide or aide memoire must be recorded in full and included in the final write-up.

5. Do not use a tape recorder. The process of writing/typing encourages you, the interviewer, to pay close attention to what is being said and stops you from going off on tangents.

6. Decide on the code name or number to be used for each interview, to preserve the anonymity of the people interviewed.

As you begin

1. Introduce the project and yourself. Use a handout – a brief written description – as a basis for introduction.

2. Affirm the confidentiality of the interview – explain how you will protect confidentiality.

3. At the start of the interview describe briefly what kinds of topics will be covered in the interview itself.

4. Ask the informant to tell you the necessary data for the **face sheet** which accompanies each interview. Depending on the project, the face sheet data will include some or all of the following: age, geographic area informant lives in, education, salary range, occupation, number of children, marital status. There is a sample face sheet on p. 77.

Sometimes filling out the face sheet before you begin the actual interview helps to loosen things up. However, some researchers feel more comfortable asking these kinds of questions at the close of the interview after a trust has been established between the informant and the interviewer.

5. If you haven't already got the informant's name and address, ask for it now so you can send a thank-you letter. Do not put this information on the face sheet or interview notes. Put it on another piece of paper, then transfer the information to the master list of informants when you return to your office.

6. Tell informants that you will be writing/keying in the interview rather than taping it. Assure them that if you have trouble keeping up, you will ask them to slow down a bit so that the notes are accurate.

7. Remember to focus on descriptions rather than problems. The interview is a way for the informants to tell their stories.

During the interview

1. Remember that your job is not to record your opinion of what the informant says, but to write the informant's actual words as much as possible. Writing in the first person helps, i.e. using "I" not "she" or "he."

2. The interview is a conversation, so relate to the informant in that way. Listen carefully. Go where the informant leads but be disciplined so you don't go off on tangents – or stay off for very long. This means at times you may have to say, "That's an interesting point but let's get back to..."

3. If informants seem uncomfortable, try to discover the sources of discomfort. Is it your manner or do they misunderstand the project? Perhaps informants feel that what they want to say is not acceptable. Make it clear that there are no right or wrong statements.

4. Be natural about agreeing or disagreeing. Arguing with informants may silence them. Too much neutrality might make informants say what they think you want to hear. You can always agree first with what is said, then pose alternative questions.

5. Don't worry about silence. Wait for the informant to decide what to say. Often what comes after the silence is very significant.

6. It is important that informants focus on their own experience. If informants are talking about everyone else but themselves, try interjecting, "How do you feel about that?" or "What did you do?"

7. Draw out the information by using more questions and asking for clarification. You can say, "Could you tell me more about that?" or

"What do you mean?" Sometimes it is helpful to use your own knowledge to assist with a question, for example, "Some people say..." or "Some people have experienced..."

8. If informants do not want to discuss a certain topic or question, do not push. Instead, try to find out why they don't want to talk about it and record this in your notes. Reassure informants that it's O.K. to pass on a question.

9. At the close of the interview ask informants how they feel. Depending on the topic, interviews can be upsetting. At the very least informants may feel vulnerable at having shared so much information.

10. Tell informants that they can get in touch with you if they think of anything else to add, of if they just want to talk. Thank informants for their time, and for the information, and for agreeing to be interviewed.

After the interview

1. Type up your interview notes as soon as possible after the interview, preferably on the same day. The longer you wait the more you're likely to forget.

2. Add interviewer's comments as appropriate. For example, if the interview was interrupted you might note: "phone rang half way through interview and informant was less focused after that."

3. File the interview.

4. Write a thank-you note to the informant, and sign it yourself.

Notes for facilitators – self-evaluation process

A facilitator can be a member or former member of the group or a friend of the group. A facilitator doesn't have to be an evalutor or a professional facilitator.

Overall points to remember

1. Make sure you have plenty of flip chart paper, felt pens and masking tape.

2. Write the agenda (list of eight headings the group has to cover) on a piece of flip chart paper on the wall – this helps you and the group to remember where the discussion is going.

3. To introduce each topic on the agenda for the self-evaluation (history, goals and objectives, context, and so on) use the introductory paragraph that follows each of these headings. You can simply read it out. In addition, you can prepare some things to say and questions to ask, to get the discussion going if people seem reluctant or hesitant.

4. Write the participants' responses to each part of the discussion as clearly as possible. Be sure to number the sheets of paper.

Ask the participants to keep an eye on what you're writing on the flip chart paper to make sure it's an accurate version of what's being said. When you decide not to write down something that's said, be sure to tell participants why – e.g. you think the point has already been made, or it fits into another part of the agenda, etc.

5. At the end of each section of the agenda do a quick review with the participants of what you've written. Underline or star the key points so that you can see them more easily later, for example, when you're doing the section on implications for future work.

6. The process works best, both psychologically and in getting participants' contributions out, when all eight topics are covered in the order listed in this guide.

7. Listen carefully. Watch the time. Pay attention to what participants are saying, and also notice if anyone is not participating. Encourage everyone to participate. Be reassuring about the process and how the meeting is going. Also remember you can ask the participants for help if you run into difficulties. Your role is to facilitate; the evaluation is the participants' responsibility; you don't have to carry it alone.

8. After the evaluation meeting, type up the notes from the flip chart verbatim to provide a complete record of the self-evaluation. Do note any comments you want to make, but be sure to identify your own comments as yours and avoid the possibility of their being considered as quotes or comments from the participants.

Specific points for each item on the self-evaluation agenda

The purpose of the self-evaluation is to get a description of the work of the organization, what work is actually being done, the context in which it is being done and how well it is progressing.

1. History

This part can take quite a while, depending on the number of participants. It may be useful to do the history separately, for example in an evening meeting prior to the rest of the evaluation.

The history section is important because it makes visible everyone's varying involvement as well as the process of growth and change in the organization. It is also an important time for the group to bond in the evaluation process; don't let anyone miss it.

It's important to get both old-timers and newcomers to give their perspective on the organization's history. Try to ensure that there's a balance. For example, if the people who've been involved for a long time are the only ones speaking, ask for someone who is relatively new to the organization to give his/her description of getting involved and his/her understanding of the group's history. Let everyone speak who wants to. Also be sure that the personal history of the participants' involvement in the organization is covered as well as their description of the history of the organization itself. Note (underline or star) any differences of opinion about dates or events in the organization's history, and the things that are significant about why and how participants got involved.

2. Goals and Objectives

Make sure that you have a list of the organization's goals and objectives before you start.

List them, as is, on a piece of flip chart paper and then work with them. If the goals and objectives need a lot of reworking and rewriting, it may be best to suggest that the evaluation indicates that goals and objectives need work and recommend that the group form a committee to do that as soon as possible. On the other hand, some groups find it useful to take an extra half hour and do that work on the spot.

3. Context

Participants tend to get stuck in negatives here, especially if the context they are working in is problematic. If this occurs, ask, "What's happened that's useful to us, what good things are going on, who's helping us?" so that a well-rounded discussion of the group's context can occur.

4. Description of work

Facilitators should be sure to check with the participants to understand who the participants are – board members, staff, volunteers, etc. Begin the "description of work" discussion by asking the participants to identity areas of work as the first part of the "what we do" discussion. List the areas the participants identify and use that list as a guide during the discussion.

It is useful to review areas of work rather than specific jobs people do (especially when participants include both board members and workers/volunteers). For example, individual volunteers, staff and board members may all do administration, or public relations, or fund raising. Reviewing those things as areas of work, done by a number of people (rather than staff fundraising vs. board fundraising) makes the discussion inclusive, encourages people to see their work as part of the whole, and avoids "we/they" thinking.

This part of the evaluation meeting usually takes the longest, and groups can get stuck. It can seem as if the evaluation will go on forever and end up nowhere. But it's during the description of work discussion that accomplishments and problem points tend to become more visible, so reassure people that doing this part of the agenda gets them "over the hump" of the evaluation.

If you take a break during this part of the agenda, remind participants both before and after the break just where you are in the list of "areas of work," which ones you've covered and what's left to do. This will help everyone be clear and it will lessen the feeling of being overwhelmed by how much you still have to do.

5. External relations

This discussion usually takes place quickly and without difficulty.

6. Achievements

This discussion also usually takes place quickly and without difficulty. It is an important part of the discussion where participants affirm that the work they've done in the organization is valuable, even if they've uncovered gaps and problems so far in the evaluation.

7. Internal organization and structure

This discussion usually goes smoothly. Many groups are surprised at how easily this discussion does take place, especially if the group has some internal dissent. What participants usually realize by this point in the evaluation is that most internal problems are created more by work-related difficulties than by personal differences. Personal problems are often defused because they've been dealt with in the context of the work the group does. Remember, the focus of the evaluation is the work of the organization, not people or personalities.

8. Implications for future work

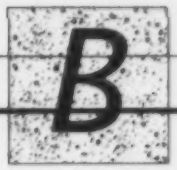
Participants are often tired at this point they may want to have this discussion on their own at another time. It is wise to encourage them to hang in as a group for another 15 minutes at least to do a brief review of the implications of the evaluation for their future work. If you've been noting key areas for review throughout the discussion (with coloured pens or "stars"), you can now go over the notes and pull out each of those problems, gaps, significant points etc., and list them.

Many groups find that the self-evaluation discussion is so complete that implications for their work have already been discussed and just need to be reviewed specifically at this time.

Conclusion

It is important to encourage groups to plan a post-evaluation meeting to review all the notes from the evaluation and do ongoing planning based on the evaluation findings.

Remember: evaluation results are meant to be used.



Data gathering tools

Interview guide

This interview guide was developed for residents of a transition house for battered women. You can modify it to meet your own needs.

Interview guide for residents

1. What's it like living at the transition house?

• what's an average day; what were you expecting when you came; what's good/bad about being here?

2. Family background

• why did you get married; when; what did you expect of the marriage; had you lived on your own before marriage; is religion part of your life?

3. Circumstances of the beatings (abuse)

• when did they start; under what circumstances; how frequent; what did he say or accuse you of as the reason for the beatings (effects of pregnancy, alcohol, jealousy, not allowing her to have friends, etc.)?

4. How did you leave/what made it possible for you to leave?

• when (i.e. to transition house); circumstances; had you left before; had you tried to get help before? (specify); who was helpful (social worker, friends, family, doctor, transition house workers, clergy); is the relationship over; is he trying to contact you, or are you thinking of going back, or is he harassing you; what arrangements do you have to make about the children, money etc.?

5. What are your feelings now?

• since being at the transition house

• needs that are/are not being met

6. What are you worried about/afraid of?

7. What would you like your life to be like three months from now?

• where to live, employment, courses etc for yourself and your children.

Aide memoire

You can construct your own aide memoire by building a list of key topics.

Suppose you are involved in an AIDS community service group which carries out a home care program. You need to find out if and how the program has met its users' needs. To help you do this, you are going to interview some of the users of the program.

You could make a list of topics for an aide memoire. Then you could cover all those topics in an interview with each informant.

The aide memoire might look like this:

Try to gather the informant's thoughts, knowledge and experience of how the following topic areas have been affected by the home care project:

health needs

other needs (social/economic/spiritual)

access to professional care

housing

support networks (friends, family)

transportation

shopping

housework

recreation

Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed for participants in an adult survivors' group. You can modify it to meet your own group's needs.

Profile sheet for participants in an adult survivors' group

The information we are asking for on this sheet will be kept confidential. It is information that we need to help us know what we are working for and with, and what some of the circumstances of sexual abuse are. We will use it planning and developing better services in the future.

Note: Please use the space provided after some of the questions to make additional comments. Or use the back of the sheet.

Thank you.

Today's date _____

Your age _____ Marital status _____

1. If you have children, please state the age and sex of each child:

   _____

   _____

2. If you have sisters or brothers, please give the age and sex of each:

   _____

   _____

3. What was your reason for coming to this group?

   _____

   _____

4. How did you find this organization?

   _____

   _____

5. Have you been to previous groups offered by this organization?

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

If yes, what kind of group? _____

When was it held? _____

6. Have you been to groups offered by other organizations?

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

Which organization? _____

When? _____

7. Have you had any other kind of counselling? _____

Explain briefly: _____

_____

_____

8. How old were you when the abuse began? _____

9. How long did the abuse last? _____

10. Is the offender male? ☐ female? ☐

11. Age of offender when the abuse began: _____

12. What is/was the offender's relationship to you (e.g. neighbour, father, brother etc.)? _____

_____

13. What contact do you have now with the offender? _____

_____ _____

14. Please describe the abuse, briefly (i.e. what happened; what the offender did to you): _____

_____

15. Where and when did it usually happen?: _____

_____

_____

16. Who did you first tell about the abuse? _____

What happened as a result? _____

17. Who, if anyone, reported the abuse to the social service system?

_____

What happened? _____

_____

18. Have you experienced any other kind of abuse, in addition to sexual abuse? (e.g. battered by husband? by father?) _____

By whom: _____

When: _____

Describe, briefly: _____

_____

_____

19. Have any other members of your family (brothers, sisters etc.) been abused?

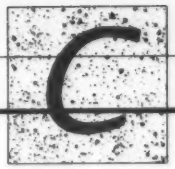
_____

20. Were they abused by the same person who abused you? _____

_____

If not, who were they abused by? _____

_____



Samples

Evaluation form for an educational workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to...

The major objective was for participants to be able to identify specific strategies that will assist...(who to do what).

1. Please indicate the degree to which the purpose and objective were met for you:

	not met		somewhat met		completely met
PURPOSE	1	2	3	4	5
OBJECTIVE	1	2	3	4	5

2. How relevant was the workshop material to your daily work?

not very relevant		quite relevant		very relevant
1	2	3	4	5

3. Comment on what ways you found the workshop content useful or not useful.

4. What were the major strengths of the workshop?

5. What were the major weaknesses of the workshop?

6. Do you have any comments about the role and effectiveness of the workshop resource people?

7. Overall, how useful was this workshop to you?

not very		somewhat		very
1	2	3	4	5

Face sheet

A face sheet can be used to collect numerical information along with the interview guide, aide memorie or questionnaire. You may wish to add to this brief list. Make sure, however, that you know *why* you are asking for information. How is it going to help the evaluation?

Code name:

Interviewer:

Place of interview:

Time: Start: Finish:

Why chosen:

Heard about project from:

Interest in project:

Comments:

Age group:

Education:

Income:

Terms of reference for an evaluation committee

The evaluation committee will consist of (list of names) and it will meet regularly with the evaluator in order to:

1. Raise and discuss matters regarding the design and use of evaluation instruments for the project work.

2. Monitor the overall evaluation process and modify it if necessary.

3. Review the data and findings of the evaluation; and analyze and discuss the implications of this material for the project's work.

4. Be the official information link between the group (board, staff, workers, group leaders, etc.) and the evaluator.

Timetable for a self-evaluation meeting

Before the meeting:

- agree on topic for evaluation
- select recorder
- get flip chart
- arrange for lunch and coffee, juice etc.

Evening session (one-and-a-half to two hours)

Introduction of participants

History of group

Day time session

9:30 - 10:00	Objectives
10:00 - 10:45	Context
10:45 - 12:00	Description of work
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Description of work, continued
2:00 - 2:30	External relations
2:30 - 3:00	Achievements
3:00 - 3:15	Break
3:15 - 4:00	Internal organization
4:00 - 4:30	Implications for future work

The Women's Research Centre is a community-based, feminist organization focused on reaseach that makes visible women's experience and facilitates action on women's issues. We have published guides on action research, strategy development and evaluation methods. We have conducted research and produced publications on violence against women, and on economic issues, including pay equity. We also assist groups in developing their own projects.

Contact the Centre for a complete list of our publications.

We are a non-profit, charitable organization funded by government grants, contracts, and donatations. (Tax receipts will be issued on request.)

We would appreciate receiving feedback from the readers of **Keeping on Track**. Please send us your comments on the book. How was it useful? How can it be improved? What further work in this area would be useful to you?

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